

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I decided today is the day I want to speak to the Senate. Tomorrow I am going to submit a resolution, and then I want to make this resolution an amendment and have a vote on it at the first opportunity. The focus is on the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. It will be a resolution that will be constructive, positive, and outline some of the steps that this administration and we as a nation can take to make sure hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of people do not starve to death in Afghanistan.

The problem is twofold. The reports are that there are about 7.5 million people who will starve to death if we do not get food assistance to them. Some of the Afghan people are going to be able to get to refugee camps in Pakistan. The problem there is the conditions in the refugee camps. The conditions are deplorable, and we are going to have to do much more to make sure people are provided food assistance and some health care.

The second problem is the elderly, the infirm, and the poorest people of Afghanistan are not going to be able to leave. This needs to be discussed on the floor of the Senate, and the Senate needs to focus on this issue. I am also trying to get the administration to focus much more on this as well.

The truth of the matter is that the air drops that have been much discussed at best may help 1 percent, probably more like one-half of 1 percent of the people, many of whom are women and children.

We will not be able to get food to people unless we do it through truck convoys and deliver it to them directly. If we do not get the food to the people in Afghanistan—we are talking about the people who are the poorest of the poor of the world who had nothing to do with the terrorist attacks against the people in our country—if we do not get the food to them in the next 4 weeks, then we are going to see in Afghanistan a humanitarian crisis of unthinkable proportions. We are going to see many innocent people starve to death.

There are two problems. The first problem is this is not what we are about as a nation. It is inconsistent with our values to not make every effort possible to get the food to people and, second, it is a matter of our national interest because if, in fact, the people in the Near East and South Asia

associate or see a direct linkage between our military action and then large numbers of people starving to death in Afghanistan, it will only create a tremendous amount of bitterness and ill will. There is absolutely no question about it.

I have always said that the use of force is something we have to do. It should be directed at the people who committed this act of mass murder in our country. We should do everything we know how to make sure innocent people do not lose their lives.

The truth is, I worry about that, but there are going to be a lot more innocent people who lose their lives through starvation than probably through this bombing campaign. We could be talking about hundreds of thousands, some say millions, of people.

The resolution contains a number of items, but one I want to focus on—and I think we need to pay very close attention to—is what the NGOs, the non-governmental organizations, organizations such as Doctors Without Borders, tell us because these are the people who have been in the trenches. They know what it is like to try to deliver food assistance. They are saying we have to figure out a way that the military action, which some have called for an end to—that is not what I am calling for as a Senator. Others have argued what we have to do, at the very least, is coordinate the military action, the bombing, with the truck convoys; otherwise, the truck convoys will not go in because they could mistakenly be bombed.

I am not sure our Government would want them to go in because we do not want them mistakenly bombed. We have to figure out some way to have agreed-upon safe corridors where people who are delivering the food through truck convoys will be able to get the food to many people in Afghanistan who are suffering, the likes of which we would never want anybody we know or love to suffer.

I talk about this today because we have not had that much focus on it. I will have a resolution tomorrow. I will try to write a piece. I will try to talk about this as much as I can to people in the country. It would be a terrible mistake for our Government, for this administration—and I think we need more clarity from the administration about how we are going to get the food to the people in Afghanistan.

The President has talked about how children have committed money and clothes to the children of Afghanistan. That is fine and good, but the truth is that will not address this humanitarian crisis, nor will the air drops.

We have to make sure the people get the food. If we do not do this the right way, if we do not get this job done, if we do not deliver the food to people there, then there is going to be massive starvation. That is unacceptable. That is unacceptable.

I am quite sure there is no support from the Taliban. They are not helpful.

It is a complicated problem, but this should be a first priority of our policy right now when it comes to the United States of America and the role we play in Afghanistan, the role we play in the Near East, the role we play in South Asia, the role we play in the world.

We cannot let innocent people starve to death. We must make every effort to make sure that does not happen, and I think to date we have not made that kind of concerted effort.

The only other thing I want to do, because I know we are about to finish, is to thank the majority leader, the minority leader, the Presiding Officer, and Senators for making sure we continue with our work. It goes down on the record so I will just say it one time.

I am no big deal at all, but I am very lucky to be a Senator from Minnesota. I am a first-generation American. My father fled persecution from Ukraine, Russia. I do not think I can ever remember a day or a period of time when I have been more emotional when I look at the Capitol. I think the work of democracy should proceed. We do not always do it as well as we should, but the work of democracy should proceed. I am glad we are in session today. I am glad we are going to be in session tomorrow. I think it is important we do so.

My hopes and prayers go to all who have been exposed to anthrax. I feel within me people will be all right, but my hopes and prayers go to everyone.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before we go out, I wanted to take a minute. We started the day in the Senate by my talking about Senator DASCHLE, the majority leader, and the difficult situation in which he found himself when a number of his employees tested positive for anthrax.

As the day draws to a close, I want on behalf of the entire Senate to express our appreciation, the Senate's appreciation, for Senator DASCHLE and how he has handled the day. It has been a remarkable period of leadership.

I have been involved in government most all my adult life, but his performance—and I say that in a most positive way—has been just exemplary today in the briefing we held down on the first floor today, with all the Senators, with Senator DASCHLE leading that discussion, with all of the personnel of the Senate there assembled, and his actions in reminding us we are Senators, that we are leaders, and we should act